

Governor's Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

**South Central JobLINC, Billings
October 20, 2006**

DRAFT MINUTES

Committee Members Present: John Beaudry, Chair; Marcella Buster; Curt Campbell; Sara Fox; Jake Gustin; James McDonald; and Warren Means.

Committee Members Absent: Natalee Barnes; Dan Dolan; Tescha Hawley; Jody Messinger; Mike Nephew; and James Patelis.

Staff: Leisa Smith; Chris Wilhelm; and Mary Eve Pietrukowicz.

WIA Staff: Pam Watson; Connie Kinsey; and Kathy Yankoff.

Guests: Drea Brown; Ingrid Childress; Tom Curry; Tom Frisby; Stephanie Gray; Cherelee Martin; Kelly Ogger; and Rebecca Riedl.

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman John Beaudry called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. While waiting for remaining members to arrive and achieve quorum, Chris Wilhelm took roll and reviewed the meeting's housekeeping and the documents in Council packets, including the Billings Chamber of Commerce packet and South Central JobLINC's *Employer Brochure* and *Resource Guide* that Manager Tom Frisby provided. Chairman Beaudry thanked Marcy Buster for bringing baked goods and asked the public to introduce themselves: Drea Brown with JMG; Tom Curry with the SWIB; Stephanie Gray with HRDC IX; Cherelee Martin with HRDC VI; Kelly Ogger with Job Corps; and Rebecca Riedl with PCWA. Leisa Smith thanked members for taking the time to work on the RFP process and thanked Mr. Frisby for inviting the Youth Council to South Central JobLINC's afternoon open house. Mr. Frisby welcomed the Youth Council to South Central and stated Lieutenant Governor Bohlinger would be attending the open house.

WIA staff Connie Kinsey, Pam Watson, and Kathy Yankoff introduced themselves. Ms. Watson stated the SWIB now has the responsibility that local boards once had regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The law is specific regarding safeguarding the competitive nature of the RFP process, which now must follow the state's procurement guidelines. This Council would be working on some of the RFP elements in accordance to the boiler plate it received at its August 8, 2006 meeting, including determining criteria, weighting the various criteria. Ms. Watson brought members' attention to the RFP flow chart she had provided. Three RFP's – Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker – are being developed, with awarded contracts to be ready by July 1st, 2007. Ms. Watson spoke about the exigency clause which allowed the postponement of RFP's through June 30, 2006. Providers' contracts were extended to give the Board enough time to engage in the RFP process.

The Council discussed various contract durations. Warren Means asked whether all money allocated to providers comes from state funds. Ms. Watson replied federal dollars are granted to states' governors, which they disburse to their departments of labor according to WIA law. Mr. Means said the federal government has specific guidelines regarding contract length, and the state needs to be in accordance. He questioned awarding five-year contracts if there is no guarantee of second-, third- or fourth-year funding and suggested providers should be subject to the same level of scrutiny as the state. Ms. Watson replied five-year contracts still meet federal requirements; the reasons to consider awarding contracts for more than one year are the time and expense involved in the RFP process. Chairman Beaudry pointed out non-performing providers would be closely scrutinized, and that while the RFP term is 5 years, contracts are awarded annually.

Jim McDonald arrived at 9:00 am; the Youth Council had a quorum.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Since Council now had a quorum, Chairman Beaudry requested a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Fox moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Buster seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously. The minutes from the Youth Council's August 8, 2006 were approved by consensus as drafted with no modifications.

Approval of Sixth Barrier Definition

Chairman Beaudry stated the Sixth Barrier had not been an agenda item at the last meeting so was placed on the agenda. He requested member discussion and public comment. Mr. Means moved to approve the Sixth Barrier definition as presented, and James McDonald seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

WIA Youth RFP Review, Criteria and Scoring

Ms. Kinsey reviewed the *RFP Criteria and Evaluation Document* table.

The five criteria are scored based on how well they are addressed by the offeror in the RFP. The weight assigned to each criterion is open for Youth Council discussion.

The *RFP Criteria and Evaluation Document* table also contained Optional Criteria and Process Elements. One of these was the inclusion of a certified One-Stop consortium agreement. Ms. Watson stated the Governor charged SWIB with increasing the number of One-Stops in the state. Including them in the RFP process was a way for the certified centers to be recognized. Providing evidence of a One-Stop would not give the offeror additional points, since it would be scored "pass/fail", but a One-Stop presence may make a difference in the case of a tie between offerors. Ms. Watson said any optional criteria/elements that the Youth Council wanted to require could be added.

The group then discussed offerors who service more than one MACo District. Kathy Yankoff said the contract language states an award can be granted wholly or in part. Chairman Beaudry asked members and then the public to comment. Ms. Fox stated services provided across the districts of a multi-district provider need to be reviewed to be sure they are comparable. Mr. McDonald expressed concern about the different needs of different regions around the state. Stephanie Gray said from her experience writing two proposals, it was easier to write one, indicating the same level of service would be provided in all service areas. Chairman Beaudry said it sounded like those present were encouraging multi-district offerors to submit a single proposal, but cautioning care when evaluating.

Mr. Means said he had seen lists of providers located in larger, metropolitan areas of the state but questioned what services were being provided in other areas, like reservations. Ms. Kinsey replied this could be made part of the RFP. The WIA Unit's monitoring currently evaluates how reservations were being serviced with other funding, for instance, with the U.S. Department of Labor's Title 166 direct allocations. Ms. Fox said HRDC serves Big Horn County, and staff travels to the reservation to work directly with the people. Ms. Buster said Job Corps worked closely with Fort Belknap on a weekly and bi-weekly basis. Mr. Means said he had seen activity in Wolf Point but wanted to know the standards and how activities were promoted. He inquired how reduced funding affected the service mix for reservation youth. Curt Campbell responded 60% of his youth were Native Americans and pointed out reservation youth have different needs. He develops a case plan for each child. Ms. Kinsey stated these concerns could be added to the Work Plan.

Ms. Gray stated the strength of youth programs was staff traveling to the youth. Cherelee Martin said HRDC VI had an 18-member board which included a county commissioner from each county served. HRDC VI served the most disadvantaged youth. Mr. Means stated this was good to hear but expressed concern that Fort Peck was experiencing 63% unemployment vs. 2 % in Billings; services need to be provided based on need. Ms. Martin pointed out funds had been cut to the extent that she served 35 youth in a six-county area who did not have other services available to them. To keep cost down, her staff accepted low wages, and the program had no frills. Mr. Means asked whether reduced funding had changed the services that providers were obliged to provide. Ms. Yankoff replied the number of persons served had been reduced, but the types and levels of service provided were constant.

The Youth Council then discussed incomplete proposals. Ms. Watson said one option would be to decline incomplete applications, the advantage being to keep the playing field level and the RFP process equitable. Mr. Means asked whether external evaluators would be utilized. Ms. Yankoff replied the evaluation team would not include WIA staff but could include SWIB and Youth Council members, and representatives from other regulatory partners. Ms. Watson added evaluators would have to declare they did not have a conflict of interest. Mr. Means asked whether providers underwent a program audit. Ms. Yankoff replied there was an annual fiscal and program review.

After the break, Ms. Smith mentioned the Youth Council's working lunch would be catered, and the meeting would be breaking to attend the One-Stop open house, with opening comments by Lt. Governor Bohlinger.

Chairman Beaudry asked whether proposal offerors needed to demonstrate their ability to administer to youth. Ms. Kinsey said currently the language was more general. Ms. Watson added providers to adults may want to add youth to their programs but would not be able to indicate past youth experience. Mr. Means was concerned about the general format: youth seeking full time jobs at ages 14-16 years were in different circumstances than job-seeking youth ages 18-21 years. Ms. Buster suggested using language that gave an age range rather than using the word *youth*. Ms. Kinsey pointed out the WIA law delineated language that could be placed in the RFP. Ms. Gray stated providers often deal with an entire family. Providers would need to indicate how they were getting up to speed because it is critical they work with other youth providers. Ms. Smith brought members' attention to Ms. Gray's emailed public comment contained in their packets, which stated work with youth required a different mindset. Providers would need to show an

understanding of youth and address staff training in the RFP. Ms. Watson said additional language could be added to address this issue.

Mr. Means suggested a brief statement be added regarding a provider's ability/capacity to work with schools and potential employers. Chairman Beaudry added that more points could be given if offeror has experience with Title 1B youth.

Ms. Kinsey stated many providers try to immediately place their clients in a position paying the self-sufficient \$9.90 rate. Clients may return for more services if they were placed in a low-wage job. Jake Gustin asked whether the \$9.90 was adjusted for youth. Ms. Kinsey replied providers' priority with youth was to help them finish their education, with services starting as early as 14 years of age and potentially lasting to age 21 years. The \$9.90 pay would make sense for the older teens. Chairman Beaudry asked whether inclusion of the self-sufficient pay rate was being rated in the RFP. Ms. Yankoff stated there were other indicators of youth success, such as completing high school. Ms. Fox added other performance measures had to be met, such as attending post-secondary education. Self-sufficiency could vary among regions of the state due to regional issues. Mr. Campbell added younger youth had different performance measures; older youth should have the better pay. Ms. Buster stated the Job Corps sets minimum youth wage at a little over \$8. Ms. Kinsey pointed out a youth at age 18 could be enrolled simultaneously in youth and adult programs; and the Youth Council could set its own self-sufficiency level. Ms. Watson said the Youth Council could recommend the SWIB re-define self-sufficiency. Mr. McDonald suggested including the dollar amount, and *at levels of self-sufficiency* to show wage progress for the 14-year-old youth aging in the program. Chairman Beaudry said offerors needed to demonstrate their efforts to bring clients up to self-sufficiency. Mr. Means suggested setting parameters, to include a minimum wage for youth.

Ms. Yankoff said language could be added for providers serving multiple districts to demonstrate they give adequate attention to clients throughout the service area. Mr. Means added the importance of providers demonstrating this in light of burgeoning caseloads and fewer dollars.

Ms. Fox pointed out adult programs needed to demonstrate core and intensive services, but youth programs did not. She suggested clarifying language in the RFP criteria.

Ms. Gray stated her office is certified but had never administered the TABE; the RFP language should allow TABE to be performed through partnerships. Mr. Gustin said the Adult Learning Center administers the test; it is given as both a pre- and post-test. Ms. Buster said administering providers must be certified. Chairman Beaudry, Ms. Yankoff, Mr. Means and Ms. Kinsey all suggested adding language to clarify the TABE. Ms. Yankoff and Ms. Watson said the offeror should describe its plan for administering or coordinating the TABE. Mr. McDonald asked how well providers were accepting the move to such a single standard test. Ms. Yankoff replied there are varying levels of acceptance, but Ms. Yankoff and Ms. Buster stated the single test provides statewide consistency. Ms. Kinsey pointed out the testing screen converts scores to a grade level as required under WIA.

Mr. Campbell expressed concern that summer employment was not separate from employment the rest of the year. Ms. Fox stated some youth worked only summers. Ms. Yankoff said in earlier pre-WIA times, summer funding was separate, but currently funding is combined. Ms. Kinsey pointed out the WIA Manual includes this item.

Mr. Means requested more specific language than *eligible providers*. Ms. Kinsey said the language could be expanded to include the Job Corps, and juvenile justice. Ms. Fox suggested the wording *other youth providers* or *WIA-eligible providers who have been identified*.

WIA funds spent on adult and dislocated workers attending schools must be on the authorized Education and Training Provider List (ETPL). Ms. Kinsey said providers must exhibit knowledge of the ETPL, and not necessarily be on it themselves. Member of the public Ms. Gray pointed out providers needed more than a list to access eligible training in rural areas and small towns.

Council discussion followed, resulting in minor amendments and wording changes for clarification.

Mr. Means suggested the 12-page document of Department of Labor and Industry's acronyms be included with the RFP.

During the working lunch, the Youth Council discussed *Evaluation/Scoring Recommendations* for the Five *Required Criteria* (column 2, *RFP Criteria and Evaluation Document* table). The Youth Council decided on the following weights:

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| 1. Agency Profile and Experience. | 10% of total |
| 2. Demonstrated Effectiveness. | 20% |
| 3. Work Plan and Method of Providing Services and Activities. | 40% |
| 4. Financial Systems. | 20% |
| 5. Participant and Budget Information. | 10% |

Ms. Watson stated mandatory WIA performance measures are monitored annually. All offerors and the awarded contractors would receive a copy so they will know the expectations. Ms. Yankoff added every provider reports data to the state. The state then in turn, provides the US DOL.

The Youth Council discussed ideal types of letters of support that evaluators might want to see as proof of community support. Members also discussed the ideal number of letters of support that evaluators might want to see, or whether a number should even be set. Mr. Gustin said rural offerors who had only a few partners within a 100-mile radius may have a problem providing enough letters, if a certain number were required. He and Mr. Means pointed out that setting a number would place a burden on proposal writers. Ms. Watson pointed out this Criterion is scored as Pass/Fail; it is not weighted. The Council agreed to cap the number of letters of support.

Mr. Means asked whether a negotiation process for missing or sketchy elements existed in the instance of a sole offeror. Ms. Kinsey stated this was part of contract language; Ms. Yankoff stated if the sole offeror scored 70% or higher but exhibited deficiencies in language, negotiation could occur to increase the score. Ms. Buster asked whether a sole offeror who scored below 70% could re-apply. WIA staff indicated this was possible. Mr. Gustin suggested administrative corrective action. Mr. Means expressed concern that the process be formalized.

Mr. McDonald inquired about instances in which there was no offeror for a particular area of the state. Ms. Yankoff said WIA staff is undergoing the RFP process for the first time, but that an RFP possibly would be re-issued under those circumstances. Ms. Kinsey and Mr. Means stated more agencies had begun to apply for such funding. Mr. Means asked how the RFP process was advertised. Ms. Yankoff replied the RFP was promoted by the Department of Administration, with assistance from WIA staff.

Council Action

After the Youth Council returned from recess to attend the South Central JobLINC One-Stop Center's open house, Mr. Means suggested WIA staff draft the day's changes and return the document to members for review. Ms. Watson advised that based on the timeline and the fact action is required by the Council and full SWIB, the Council could approve the document as modified, and then await the amended version, to be circulated before the SWIB's December 1st, 2006 meeting. Chairman Beaudry requested Youth Council members who had a conflict of interest to abstain from the vote regarding the *RFP Criteria and Evaluation Document* changes. Mr. Gustin asked whether it would be a conflict of interest if a program operator with whom Mr. Gustin was involved requested a letter of support. Ms. Yankoff clarified conflict of interest would be present only if Mr. Gustin had a vested interest in the RFP process as a potential recipient of awarded funds. Chairman Beaudry requested a motion to accept the *RFP Criteria and Evaluation Document* as amended. Mr. McDonald motioned, and Mr. Gustin seconded. Ms. Fox and Mr. Campbell abstained. The motion carried with the two abstentions.

Designation of RFP Process Responsibility

Ms. Watson summarized next steps in the RFP process. The Youth Council will present the amended document to the SWIB in December. The RFP will be sent out in January, 2007. One of two contract officers at the Department of Administration will field questions, contacting WIA Staff to get clarification and then post questions/answers on the Department of Administration web site. In the past, the administrative entity of local boards coordinated the evaluation team. Now, to maintain neutrality, Ms. Smith (SWIB) and WIA Unit staff would assume that duty. SWIB Chairman Dan Miles may also want to be involved. Once the evaluation team compiles the results, the Youth Council will receive the scores and recommendations for selecting the service providers, which are then taken to the SWIB for final action.

Chairman Beaudry asked members whether any of them would be interested in being evaluators. Mr. Means, Mr. McDonald, and Ms. Buster volunteered. Ms. Smith stated evaluation teams usually consist of five to six persons. Chairman Beaudry thanked the public for their input and members for their diligence. Ms. Martin thanked the Youth Council for the openness of the RFP process and staff for the opportunity for public comments.

Next Meeting

Chairman Beaudry and Ms. Smith stated amendments to the *RFP Criteria and Evaluation Document* will be made and emailed as an attachment for members to review. Chairman Beaudry said the Youth Council may schedule a conference call, if necessary, prior to the December 1 SWIB meeting. Ms. Smith pointed out the next SWIB meeting will be held Friday, December 1st, 2006. In the past, Youth Council meetings have been held the day before, for members' travel convenience. She requested members block Thursday, November 30th, 2006.

Adjournment

Mr. Means motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Buster. With no further business, Chairman Beaudry adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

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